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THE ECLIPSE OF THE ‘ABBASID CALIPHATE

Original Chronicles of the Fourth Islamic Century

EDITED, TRANSLATED, AND ELUCIDATED

BY

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1921.

THE ECLIPSE OF THE ‘ABBASID CALIPHATE’

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PREFACE AND INDEX

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PREFACE

MR H F AMEDROZ, who had won the gratitude of students of Islamic history by his editions of Hilal's *Book of the Viziers*, and Ibn al-Qalanisi's *History of Damascus*, besides numerous monographs on legal and historical subjects,¹ was occupied in the last years of his life with preparing an edition of the portions of Miskawayhi's work which deal with events posterior to the Chronicle of Tabari, to be followed by the Continuation by Abu Ahuja', and a new edition of the fragment of Hilal's Chronicle which he had already published as an appendix to the *Book of the Viziers*. Of the volumes of Miskawayhi an edition had already been issued by the Gibb Trustees, being facsimile by photography of the copy in Constantinople, Mr Amedroz, himself one of the Trustees, had provided one of the volumes with a Preface. The facsimile is not easily legible even by experts, and Mr Amedroz besides deciphering it, had collated the second volume with a Bodleian MS (Marsh 357 covering 345–367 A H),² and had supplemented the author's statements from various MS sources, both earlier and later than Miskawayhi. For the edition of Abu Shujā' photographs of the Constantinople MS had been lent by the Sultanic (then Khedivial) Library of Cairo.³ This MS is exceedingly clear, though in many respects faulty.

The proofs were regularly submitted by him to the present writer, who had for many years had something like a partnership of studies with him. In October of 1916 I accepted an invitation to lecture at Lahore, and in consequence of my absence from England Mr Amedroz stopped the printing which had by that time reached about the middle of Volume III. I was shocked on my return to England in April, 1917, to find that he had passed away the month before. In his will he left a sum of money for the completion of the work, including a translation, with the request that I should undertake this.

I proceeded to carry out his wishes, but the work was interrupted by a journey to the East in the winter 1918–1919, undertaken in connexion with the War. It was however to Mesopotamia, giving me the opportunity of seeing some of the country which forms the theatre of the events recorded in these Chronicles. One of the few cases wherein haste in literary matters is not only excusable but desirable is when the completion of a dead man's work is laid upon some one who is him-

¹ A memoir of him was inserted in the J R A S for 1917, p. 632.

² A MS of the Asiatic Museum, Petrograd, has been described by Ivanow.

³ These were returned to the Library in 1919.

self advanced in years Although then I have done my best to understand these texts and render them intelligibly, I am conscious that much more might have been done in the way of annotation, and collation with other authorities, ancient and modern¹ In the Index to which this final volume is devoted I have used that of Barbier de Meynard to his *Prairies d'Or* as my model, and have tried to satisfy the needs of any who may wish to consult these volumes For this reason the quantity of the vowels in the proper-names, which to avoid the appearance of pedantry as well as expense has been left unmarked in the text, has been given in the Index An attempt has been made in the translation by the use in certain places of small capitals, and by adhering to the same name for the same person, to render it easier for the reader to follow the narrative The authors' practice of varying on the same page between the *Ism*, the *Kunyah*, the *Nisbah*, and the *Lagab*, provides the reader who is not an expert with a wholly unnecessary puzzle

Of Miskawaihi, from whose Universal History the first two volumes are taken, Mr Amedroz compiled a notice, prefixed to the first volume of the Gibb facsimile The sources for his life are his own statements, collected in the Index, and the notice in the *Irshad al-Arib*, ii 88 foll , compiled in the main from sources which are still accessible, though awaiting publication, viz the *Imta'* of Abu Hayyan Tauhid,² and the *Tatimmat al-Yatimah* of Tha'alibi.³ Yaqut (author of the *Irshad*) states apparently on his own authority that Miskawaihi was a convert to Islam from Magianism , if this be true, the names of his father and grandfather, Mohammed and Ya'qub, are likely to be fictitious That Miskawaihi was the *laqab* of himself, not of his father, appears very clearly from the statements of his contemporaries Abu Hayyan and Tha'alibi , the *Ibn* which is prefixed in the printed editions of some of his works and in the printed texts of Hamadhani's *Rasa'il* is due to his calling himself *Ahmad b Mohammed Miskawaihi*, whence some supposed the *laqab* to belong to the father He tells us that he studied Tabari's Chronicle with *Ahmad b Kamil*, 260-350 A H , who lived in the Sharī' 'Abd al-Samad⁴ in Baghdad He also speaks of long association with the vizier Muhallabi, who died in 352 , his death-date is given as 9 Safar 421 (Feb 16, 1030), and this seems to be right, since the notice of him in the *Tatimmat* implies that he belongs to a later

¹ Use should have been made in volume i and ii of the scholarly and tasteful volumes of Schlumberger

² A copy of the first volume of this work was lent me in Baghdad, and a copy of the whole, photographed from one in the Top-kapu Library of Constantinople, is in possession of Ahmad Pasha Zeki of Cairo

³ The copy in the Berlin Library was lent me for a time, and the whole photographed

⁴ This is repeated by Yaqut, *Irshad* ii. 17

generation than the persons mentioned in the *Yatimah*, and in poems there quoted he speaks of his extreme old age. Perhaps the date of his birth may be provisionally fixed as 330 A H , or a little earlier. It is not known how he obtained the favour of Muhallabi , probably one who knew Persian well would have some advantage at a Persian court such as that of Mu'izz al-daulah. Since he claims to have been in the society of Ibn al-'Amid I for seven years, he is likely to have repaired to the court of Rayy immediately after Muhallabi's death in 352 , and indeed a dependent of that vizier would not be over safe in Baghdad. Ibn al-'Amid died in 360 , Miskawaihi was his librarian, and present with him on various historic occasions. After his death Miskawaihi seems to have entered the service of his son and successor Ibn al-'Amid II After his death in 366 he appears to have obtained employment with 'Adud al-daulah, who gave him various commissions which he recounts After 'Adud al-daulah's death in 372 he appears to have gone into hiding, in the house of one Ibn al-Khammar, and Abu Hayyan, whose work *al-Imta'* ostensibly contains narrations wherewith he entertained the vizier Ibn Sa'dan who was put to death in 375 A H , asserts that "within these days" he had lent Miskawaihi a commentary on the *Isagoge* of Porphyry and the *Categories* of Aristotle Abu Hayyan taunts him with having had the opportunity of hearing the philosophical lectures of 'Amiri in Rayy for five years, and having absolutely failed to take advantage of it To this charge Miskawaihi replies¹ that 'Amiri himself found himself a mere beginner as compared with Ibn al-'Amid I It may be observed that Miskawaihi's quotations of Aristotle in his *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* are unusually accurate

For his later career Thālibi has the enigmatical sentences . After holding a series of high posts in the service of the Buwahids and being an intimate of Baha al-daulah, so that he became extremely eminent, he disdained to serve the *Sahib*, to whom he did not consider himself inferior , he was not free from reverses of fortune and uttered a verse of which the authorship is disputed between him and some other eminent men, complaining of the uncertainties of fortune and the faithlessness of friends He also composed a poem addressed to 'Amid al-Mulk wherein the latter is congratulated on the coincidence of the *Day of the Sacrifice* and the *Mihriyan*

If Miskawaihi was closely associated with Baha al-daulah, it is surprising that there is no mention of him by either Abu Shuja' or Hilal, who deal at length with Baha al-daulah's affairs By the *Sahib Isma'il b 'Abbad* is naturally meant , he was vizier at Rayy under Fakhr al-daulah. Yaqut records a scene in 358 at Rayy when Miskawaihi met

this personage¹; this was in the days of Ibn al-'Amid I It seems unlikely that he can be meant by Tha'alibi, who probably refers to the *Sahib* 'Amid al-Juyush, who was put in charge of affairs by Baha al-daulah in 392² By 'Amid al-Mulk the vizier of the Seljuq Sultan Toghril, Kundari, is ordinarily meant, he can scarcely have had that title in the lifetime of either Miskawaihi or Tha'alibi Possibly the person meant is the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk, who is called the 'Amid by Ibn Khaldun,³ or some other less distinguished vizier, on whom the title may have been bestowed

Both Abu Hayyan and Tha'alibi admire the verses of Miskawaihi, which appear to have satisfied the expert judgment of Ibn al-'Amid I The former asserts that he devoted his time to the futile pursuit of alchemy, but Abu Hayyan's statements about men who had been more successful than himself cannot be trusted It is surprising that Ibn Abi Usaib'i ah mentions him not only as a philosopher, but as a physician, naming even certain works composed by him on medical subjects, a *kitab al-ashribah* " Book of Draughts " and a *Kitab al-tabikh* " Cookery Book," with a selection from the former made by Ibn al-Tilmidh.⁴ That our author is meant is shown by the mention of the *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* among his works Some out of the way medical knowledge is once or twice displayed in the History, but not sufficient to have enabled us to guess that the author followed this profession

The letters addressed to him in the collections of Hamadhanî and Khwarizmî contain very little information That of the latter is on a stock subject—consolation on a mother's re-marriage, of which an example is given by Tanukhi⁵, it may help us in a vague way to confirm the date of Miskawaihi's birth as inferred above For Khwarizmî's life lasted from 323 to 383⁶, and from the tone of his letter we might infer that he was somewhat older than his correspondent In one of Hamadhanî's letters there may be a reference to the " Experiences of the Nations."⁷ It would seem that Miskawaihi had some cause of complaint against this remarkable man, which the latter endeavours to remove But the letters give no clue to its nature

Yaqut enumerates the following works by him.

- 1 *Al-Fauz al-Akbar*
- 2 *Al-Fauz al-Asghar* (Printed, Beyrouth 1319)

¹ *Irshad* ii 300

² He is called *Sahib* in the headings of the Sharif al-Radi's poems, p 320 and p 111 (dirge on him, A.H 401).

³ iv 473, 1 8 a f

⁴ 245 and 276.

⁵ *Nishwar* 237.

⁶ *Yatimat al-dahr* iv 127

⁷ Beyrouth, 1890, p 528.

- 3 *Tajārib al-Umam.*
- 4 *Ums al-Farīd*
- 5 *Tartib al-'ādāt*
- 6 *Al-Mustaufi*
- 7 *Al-Jāmi'*
- 8 *Jāwidhan-i-khirad*
- 9 *Al-Siyar*

Of these the second has, as has been seen, been printed, of the third portions were printed by de Goeje in his *Fragmenta Historicorum Arabum*, and a facsimile of the whole is in process of publication by the Gibb Trustees. No 5 may be identical with the *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, which has been printed (Cairo, 1317). Of 8 an account was given by de Sacy in *Notices et Extraits* x 95 and (at greater length) *Mémoires de l'Institut* ix 1 foll. For the remainder we must at present be satisfied with Yaqut's descriptions. No 4 was a collection containing tales, poems, maxims and proverbs, not arranged in chapters. No 6 was a selection of odes. No 9 was a treatise on morals, interspersed with Traditions, Qur'anic texts, philosophy and poetry. No 7 is not described.

He was clearly a man of very considerable learning and far removed from any sort of fanaticism, though not, it would seem, free from professional jealousy. This appears in his treatment of Ibn Baqīyyah, who had the audacity to become vizier without belonging to the Clerks' (*kuttāb*) profession. Muqtadir thought that by appointing one who was not a member of that order to the vizierate he would disgrace himself in the eyes of all sovereigns, Moslem and non-Moslem, they would suppose that there was no Clerk in his empire fit for the post, or else that he deliberately slighted the order.¹ Miskawayhi appears also to have shared the Buwaihid animosity to the Hamdanids; he minimizes Saif al-daulah's exploits. As one who had been in the service of Buwaihid princes he might have been expected to show some partiality towards them, but of this there is little trace. He represents both 'Imad al-daulah and Mu'izz al-daulah as utterly unscrupulous, with perhaps no positive virtue except family affection; and if he extols Rukn al-daulah's sense of honour, he holds that this Sultan gratified it at the expense of his realm. For the internal administration of all three he has unmitigated contempt. Of his master 'Adud al-daulah, probably the ablest Sultan of this line, his summing-up is far more judicial than is that of Abu Shuja'. He admits that this personage had some merits which might serve as a counterpoise to his crimes.

¹ Hilal, *Wuzara*, p. 322

Miskawaihi claims to be an independent authority from the year 340, from which point he had materials furnished him orally by leading actors in the events, Muhallabi, vizier in Baghdad, and Abu'l-Fadl Ibn al-'Amid, vizier in Rayy. In many important events he himself took part. This was an excellent qualification for a historian, especially because the offices which he held were not such as to throw much responsibility upon himself, he had access to the state secrets without being personally concerned in them to any great extent.

For the beginnings of the Buwaihid dynasty (322-340), if Abu Shuja is to be believed, he followed Ibrahim the Sabi'an, whose work on the subject, called the *Tajī* (after 'Adud al-daulah's title *Taj al-Millah*) was revised by 'Adud al-daulah himself. The author is said to have described this treatise as a pack of lies¹, if these lies were for the glorification of the Buwaihids—and it is difficult to imagine any other purpose which they can have had—Miskawaihi appears to have omitted them, for there is little in the work which redounds to their glory and has the appearance of being mythical except some of those stories which deal with the sources of 'Imad al-daulah's wealth, on the other hand while Miskawaihi may well have relied on the *Tajī* for what went on in Baghdad while he was himself in the Jabal, the former's narrative gives the appearance of unvarnished truth.

For the period before 340 it is evident that Miskawaihi's main authority in these volumes is the *Chronicle of Thabit b. Sinan*,² which, starting about where Tabari terminated, continued the history to the time of its author's death (about 363). This remarkable man had special opportunities of learning the inner history of his time. Mr Amedroz thought Miskawaihi's debt to Suli,³ the author of the *Aurāq*, considerable. Besides these authorities he doubtless learned much from the political personages with whom he associated in Baghdad and elsewhere, and who supplied many an anecdote.

Although then this Chronicle is marked by some gross examples of carelessness, to which attention is called in the notes, it is on the whole one of the most instructive in the Arabic language. For a considerable portion of it the author writes about persons whom he knew intimately, and institutions with which he was himself familiar. For two of his employers, Muhallabi and Ibn al-'Amid I he has admiration which approaches enthusiasm, yet this admiration does not induce him to conceal deflexions on their part from the paths of wisdom and honour. His power of character-drawing is remarkable; each of the host of

¹ *Irshad al-Arib*, 1 325

² Wustenfeld, *Geschichtsschreiber*, No 135

Ibid 115

characters who come upon the stage is easily distinguishable, and the more important, of whom the number is very considerable, are exceedingly lifelike Comparison with the Chronicle of 'Aṣṭab will impress this fact on the reader's mind The superiority of Miskawaihi as a historian to Tabari is also very marked Tabari's value *decreases* as he comes within his own time He has not the political experience which could enable him to give an intelligible account of the sequence of events or that personal acquaintance with the leading personages which would have furnished vividness and reality to his chronicle Hence the important reign of Mu'tadid, which gave a new lease of life to the Caliphate, and brought the vizierate to the zenith of its power, is as poorly recorded as any section of Islamic history The period covered by the two volumes of Miskawaihi is on the other hand as well recorded as any The ruin of the Caliphate by Muqtadir, the rise of the various adventurers who were ultimately superseded by the Buwayhid dynasties, the series of events which substituted for an empire a group of principalities, is recounted by him in a manner which appeals at once to the reason and the imagination

Both Tabari and Miskawaihi are liable to the reproach that they fail to mention the most important personages of their times , we look in vain in the Chronicle of the former for the name of Mohammed b Isma'il Bukhari, whose Collection of Traditions rivals the Qur'an in sanctity, and in that of the latter for the name of Abu'l-Hasan Ash'ari, after whom orthodox Islam is called Both historians are to be blamed for failing to discern the really important among contemporary movements , but Tabari, as a professional theologian, is much the more culpable of the two Miskawaihi has very little interest in religious matters, and is a whole-hearted admirer of the tolerant policy of 'Adud al-daulah, whose rigid justice enabled all sects and cults to live together in harmony It is rarely that we meet with any expression in Miskawaihi's work whence we could infer that the writer was a Moslem And indeed the profession to which he belonged was largely staffed by members of the tolerated sects The most eminent of his contemporary clerks was a Sab'i'an—Ibrahim, grandfather of the historian Hilal Christian clerks meet us constantly in these pages One of the candidates for the vizierate in Muqtadir's time—Ibn Abi'l-Baghī—had written a book in refutation of the Qur'an

For further information about the personages who figure on Miskawaihi's pages reference must be made to a work of which the translation has for the present to be kept back , the original Arabic is being published by the Royal Asiatic Society This is the *Nishwar al-Muhadarah* of Abu 'Ali Muḥassīn Tanukhī, a Mesopotamian judge

occasionally employed on political missions as his father had been ; despatched by 'Adud al-daulah on one of such extreme delicacy that he shammed illness rather than execute it , having previously helped to frustrate a scheme of that monarch for the arrest of the mighty vizier Ibn 'Abbad He had associated on intimate terms with the most eminent men of his time, and was observant, and retentive This *Table-talk*, of which only one volume out of eleven has been discovered, is a mine of information about the customs of the time and the conduct of his contemporaries

The Chronicle which follows that of Miskawaihi is by an author of very different calibre, Zahir al-din Mohammed b Husain Rudhrawari, vizier of Muqtadı from 476–484 (1083–1091) There is a biography of him in the work of Ibn Khallikan (translated by De Slane, iii 288–290) He died in 488 (1095) The work is written after the death of Alp-Arslan (465–1072),¹ and in the reign of Jalal al-din Malikshah (465–485 = 1072–1092), when Muqtadı was Caliph (467–487 = 1075–1094).² It was the author's intention to bring it down to his own time, but some circumstances evidently prevented him from chronicling more than a few years He tells us that what he admired in Miskawaihi was the moralizing, and this he imitates without however possessing the practical wisdom which makes Miskawaihi's generalizations instructive His work appears to be in the main an abridgment of the Chronicle of Hilal b Muḥassin b Ibrahim, which was a continuation of that of Thabit b Sinan which has already been mentioned Of Hilal's Chronicle only one part has as yet come to light, viz that reprinted here from Mr Amedroz's edition appended to the *Kitab al-Wuzara* and based on the British Museum MS Add 19 360. Hilal, who lived from 359–448, and belonged to a family of clerks, was like Miskawaihi near the centre of politics, and is likely to have been acquainted with the prominent personages Mr Amedroz published a biography of him taken from the chronicle of Sib̄ Ibn al-Jauzi, which however is mainly occupied with edifying matter dealing with Hilal's conversion to Islam His conversion took place late in life and it is noticeable that the sole temple of the Sabi'ans, that in Harran, was destroyed by the Egyptians in 424, in consequence whereof many of the sect embraced Islam.³ Possibly Hilal was one of the converts on this occasion

The edition of Abu Shuja' has been made from a set of photographs in the possession of the Sultanic (formerly Khedivial) Library in Cairo. The photographs appear to have been made from a MS in Constantinople For the fragment of Hilal Mr Amedroz had a number of

¹ Vol. iii 50, 75

² Vol. iii. 3 (Arabic Text).

³ Dimishqī, ed Mehren, p 191.

emendations suggested by the late Professor de Goeje and others, these (mainly consisting in punctuation of letters) have been introduced

It was the suggestion of the present writer that these texts should be translated in *extenso*, as an epitome of contents such as Mr Amedroz had prefixed to his editions of Hilal and Ibn al-Qalanisi can scarcely be used except by Arabic scholars. The process of translating and indexing revealed four sources of error, oversights of the author, of his copyists, of the editor and of the printer. For the fourth class some excuse may be found in the fact of the book being printed in Egypt, and most of it at a time when communication was difficult, although Mr Faraj Allah al-Kurdi (the printer) took a keen interest in the work, the inconvenience resulting from the cause that has been mentioned could not be avoided altogether. For the first class the author has some excuse in the fact that he was composing a universal history, whence his interest in the sequence of events at times naturally slackened.

It was the intention of the writer to prefix to the translations an Introductory Volume, in which the information contained in these and contemporary texts about the political and social institutions of the Caliphate in the fourth century A H should be collected under heads. The enormous rise in the cost of printing since 1917 has rendered it impossible to use any of the fund left by Mr Amedroz for this purpose. Its execution must therefore be deferred.¹

It may be hoped that the writings of such an author as Miskawayhi may have value not only as the Chronicle of a period, but as an intelligent record of experience. Baghdad in the tenth century seems far removed both in space and time from London in the eighteenth, but there is more than one curious resemblance between the politics of the two. Lord Mahon's account of the proceedings at the accession of George II.² reads like a page out of Miskawayhi's Chronicle. The virtuous Queen Caroline secured the appointment of Sir R Walpole as Prime Minister, he having fixed and secured her favour by a well-timed offer to obtain from Parliament a jointure for her Majesty of £100,000 a year, while Compton only ventured to propose 60,000. "What better proof could be required that Walpole was fittest for Prime Minister?" The Queen, in putting Walpole's claims before the King added that he had agreed to carry through the House of Commons an increase of £120,000 to the Civil List. "Such arguments had their due weight with George II., while Horace Walpole, arriving from Paris, artfully magnified to him the difficulties of forcing negotiations in

¹ The late Professor Mez was, it is said, engaged on a similar work
² n 177

new hands " Umm Musa the Stewardess, Muqtadir, and the Queen-mother would have been quite at home in such a debate

Fallen ministers in Muqtadir's time were gravely menaced, and their position was not quite safe in England of the eighteenth century When Oxford pleads " My lords, if ministers of state, acting by the immediate commands of their sovereign, are afterwards to be made accountable for their proceedings, it may one day or other be the case of all the members of this august assembly " ¹, this reasoning can be illustrated from Miskawaihi's record , and indeed when in 1742 Sir R Walpole was forced to retire, there were demands for a prosecution , " lenity to such a one would be cruelty to the nation " ² When a minister was overthrown in Baghdad, not only he but every dependent of his had to suffer , yet one may wonder whether this principle was ever carried out there so drastically as in England in 1762 on the fall of the Duke of Newcastle " Every relative, friend or dependent of the Duke was, one after the other, turned out of his office, and their proscription extended even to the offices of Custom and Excise " ³ Torture was not indeed in England applied to such persons to make them disgorge , yet it was in use in 1731, when one Captain MacPhaedris, having refused to pay some exorbitant fees, had irons put upon his legs, which were too little, so that in putting them on his legs were likely to have been broken, etc " ⁴

Kissing the ground before monarchs was introduced in Islam towards the end of the third century A.H , if English ministers in the eighteenth century did not actually do this, at least they said they did , " Lord Chatham begs to lay himself at the King's feet " is an expression which recurs in that eminent statesman's correspondence ⁵ The attitude of the two countries towards polygamy does not show as great a difference as might have been expected , for this matter it is sufficient to refer to the record of Sir R Walpole ⁶

Finally one interesting parallel may be noticed We find that in 360 A H. the vizier Abu'l-Fadl will only accept office on condition that his sovereign Bakhtiyar swears never to reappoint Abu'l-Faraj, his rival Similarly Grenville on succeeding to Bute in April 1763 stipulated with the King that Bute should never publicly or privately interfere with any business whatever , and two years later Pitt would

¹ *Ibid* i 190

² *Ibid* iii 179

³ *Grenville Papers*, iii 152, cited by J. A. FARRER, *The Monarchy in Politics*, p 18

⁴ Mahon, ii 228

⁵ FARRER, loc. p 32

⁶ Mahon, iii 158, 160

have nothing to do with a change of government unless Bute's banishment were made a condition precedent¹

In his papers *Three Years of Buwaihid Rule in Baghdad*, J R A S 1901, *Abbasid Administration in its Decay*, *ibid* 1913, *The Vizier Abu'l-Fadl Ibn al-'Amid* in *Der Islam*, 1912, and *The Tajarib al-Umam of Abu 'Ali Miskawayhi*, *ibid* 1914 Mr Ahmedroz published some valuable matter illustrating the history of this time These and other *Opuscula* of his, if collected into a volume, would form an honourable monument to the memory of this most conscientious scholar I ought to add that the title of the whole work was chosen by me As appears from Mr R Lane Poole's admirable maps, the 'Ablaysids after two centuries regained their independence I ought also to pay a tribute to the works of Mr Guy Le Strange, without which many a topographical and geographical allusion would be unintelligible

I have to thank the Gibb Trustees for—besides other favours—their kindly reference to this work in the Preface of vol. vi of their facsimile

Reference is throughout made to the pages of the Arabic, inserted in heavy type in the translation

¹ Farrer, p. 14

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